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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: REFORMERS IN IRAN TRYING TO REGROUP

REF: DUBAI 0290

CLASSIFIED BY: Jason L Davis, Acting Consul General, Dubai, UAE.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

(C) Summary: In two recent conversations, two activists describe the reform movement in Iran as under pressure, fractured, but not defeated. End Summary

Under Pressure -----

(S) Elaheh Koulaei (please protect), a reformist member of the previous Majles in Iran, met with PolEconChief February 4. In addition to acting as spokesperson for reformist candidate Mostafa Moin's failed 2005 presidential bid, she is a senior member of the largest reform party, Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF or Mosharekat Party). (Note: Koulaei came to the U.S. Consulate in Dubai to apply for a visa to speak at the Bergedorf Round Table, co-sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Center, on reform in the Middle East and how the U.S. and Europe can contribute. The conference is to be held in Washington March 17-19 at Dumbarton House. Her views on the situation regarding Iran's nuclear program are reported septel.)

(S) Koulaei briefly described the internal situation in Iran for reformers. Since the election of Ahmadinejad, she said, the regime has put some limits on activities of reform parties. When asked for specifics, she said IIPF party members, particularly outside Tehran, were under increasing pressure. Membership was becoming "illegal in all but name." Nonetheless, she said, reformers, including her party and its secretary general, Mohammed Reza Khatami (brother of President Khatami, and former deputy speaker of the Sixth Majles), remain "active."

(S) The reform movement, however, still lacked unity, according to Koulaei. When asked if former Iranian presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi's recent efforts to establish a new party (National Trust), newspaper and television station (reftel) were helpful in unifying the opposition, she said they were having a positive effect. She explained that as a cleric, Karroubi could possibly bridge the gap between the conservatives and reformists.

Biding Their Time -----

(S) Separately, the brother of a prominent Iranian reformer recently told Conoff that as a result of Ahmadinejad's election, the reform movement is biding its time and plans to remain quiet for the next one to two years. He believed that if the movement

does not stay together and follow a distinct, well-planned strategy, there might be worse to come for the reformers, possibly even assassinations. He claimed, without providing details, that the reformers were "working on a plan." He also believed some among current key reformers had the capability to emerge as leaders, but would not mention anyone by name.

Comment

(C) Neither interlocutor wanted to offer much detail into reformers' activities or the pressures they are facing. We have heard that one strategy the government is using to quiet reformers is to launch corruption investigations against them. No one else has mentioned to us so blatantly the possibility of assassinations, but given the government's past history of eliminating oppositionists, it is certainly conceivable.

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